

13177

St. Moore

THE

8

CHARGE

OF

THE RIGHT REVEREND

THOMAS-LEWIS O'BEIRNE, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF OSSORY,

TO THE

CLERGY OF HIS DIOCESE,

IN

HIS ANNUAL VISITATION,

1796.

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.

DUBLIN, PRINTED:

LONDON, REPRINTED

FOR F. AND C. RIVINGTON, NO. 62, ST. PAUL'S
CHURCH YARD;

AND SOLD BY

FLETCHER AND HANWELL, AND J. COOK, OXFORD; AND
BY J. DEIGHTON, AND W. H. LUNN, CAMBRIDGE.

1797.

C H A R C E

THE RIGHT REVEREND

THOMAS LEWIS OSBORN, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF OSSORY,

TO THE

CLERGY OF HIS DIOCESE,



HIS ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

1700.

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.

ROBINSON PRINTED.

LONDON, REPRINTED

CHURCH LANE,

PRINTED BY J. WILKINS, AND W. H. BURN, CAMBRIDGE.

ADVERTISEMENT.

A COPY of the Dublin edition of the following very interesting Charge, delivered by a zealous and worthy Prelate of the Church of Ireland, to the Clergy of his Diocese, having reached England, the contents of it appeared to some Clergymen here, to be so pertinent, seasonable, and apostolic, that application was made to his Lordship, for permission to have an edition printed in London, in a hope that, under God's blessing, it might be made instrumental to the furtherance of those good purposes, for which it is evidently calculated, within limits more extensive than the Diocese of Ossory, or the Irish Church.

This application to the Bishop having obtained his Lordship's consent, the Charge is

again sent forth, with earnest prayer to the great Head of the Church, that the well-timed and pious exhortations of this venerable Prelate may be followed by extensive usefulness. Parts of the Charge appear to be calculated, chiefly for the Kingdom of Ireland; but even those parts may have their use here, and the bulk of it is as well suited to awaken attention, and to effect good, in this country, as in the sister-kingdom.

of Ireland, to the Clergy of his Diocese, having
to it appeared to

CLERICUS LONDINENSIS.

Christmas-Day, 1796.

Some Clergymen here, to be
reasonable, and apostolic, that application was
made to his Lordship, for permission to have
an edition printed in London, in a hope that
under God's blessing, it might be made infir-
mity to the furtherance of those good pur-
poses, for which it is evidently calculated,
within limits more extensive than the Diocese
of Orléans, or the Irish Church.

The This application to the Bishop having
been his Lordship's content, the Charge is

The EDITOR of this EDITION of the CHARGE, having procured from Ireland COPIES of the following LETTERS, makes no Apology for introducing them here.

TO THE RIGHT REVEREND THE
LORD BISHOP OF OSSORY.

MY LORD,

WHE the Clergy of the Diocese of Ossory, assembled at your Lordship's Visitation held on the 25th of August last, beg leave, a second time, to express our lively sense of your Lordship's earnest attachment to the good of the established Church of this kingdom; and of the affectionate and paternal care, with which, as a faithful Guardian, you are watchful for the welfare of the Diocese, over which you preside.

The additional experience of twelve Months, which have passed since our last General Meeting, has served to justify the Sentiments your Clergy early entertained of the Extent of your Abilities, qualifying you to instruct them—and the Excellence of your Heart, prompting you to promote their welfare.

We should be unjust to your Lordship, and wanting to our own Feelings, if we omitted this opportunity of thanking you for the institution of those Lectures in Gospel knowledge and Ecclesiastical History, in the prosecution of which, your Lordship has testified such unremitted Industry and Zeal; and from which, those of us who are in your Vicinity, have derived such considerable Information and Instruction. The able discharge of this laborious Duty, which you have imposed upon yourself, added to the satisfaction of thereby ensuring to the Diocese, a more learned and enlightened Clergy, at an Æra when their Exertions seem to be most wanted, must prove to your Lordship a source of more lasting pleasure, and solid consolation, than any thanks which we can bestow.

The Charge which your Lordship delivered to us contains such a weight of matter for our instruction, and bespeaks in your Lordship such an honest interest in the welfare of the Church and sincere concern for the character and conduct of its Ministers, that

we cannot be satisfied merely with your Lordship's delivery of it at your Visitation, but request that you will be pleased to publish it.

We have the Honour to be,

Your Lordship's most respectful
and obedient Servants,

For the Clergy of the Diocese of Ossory,

SAMUEL MADDEN, VICAR GENERAL.

Sept. 1st, 1796.

Ossory-House, September 2d, 1796.

REVEREND SIR,

I must beg the favour of you to return my warmest Acknowledgements to the Clergy of the Diocese of Ossory, for the very kind and flattering Address, which you have transmitted to me.

To find that I have in any degree, answered the favourable expectations they were pleased to conceive of me, and that I have given them Satisfaction by my humble Endeavours in the discharge of my Duty, I receive as a recompence, next in value to what they and I must ever consider as our first Object, and only Reward.

The Charge I shall get printed, as they desire. When it shall appear that it has been given to the Public at their particular Desire, they will have shewn to the World, and to their Brethren, that they, also, are in earnest; that they consider the Times, as calling upon all, who are engaged in the Ministry, for more than ordinary Exertions; and that every Undertaking that professes to support the Credit, and promote the Usefulness of their Holy Profession, is certain to meet their most hearty Approbation and zealous Concurrence.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your faithful humble Servant,

T. L. OSSORY.

To the Reverend Dr. Madden.

THE
C H A R G E

OF
THE RIGHT REVEREND

T H O M A S - L E W I S,

LORD BISHOP OF OSSORY.

REVEREND BRETHREN,

WHEN I last addressed you, thus assembled together, the circumstances under which we met, and the disturbed state of the Christian world, necessarily held a principal place, in the communications that passed between us. Another year has elapsed, and the prospect, instead of brightening, or assuming a more encouraging appearance, is become still more gloomy and dispiriting.

If we look abroad, the despisers of the name of God, and the apostates from his truth, continue to fill the earth with violence, rapine, and bloodshed. *Commissioned* as they appear to

~~be, from heaven, to go on conquering and to conquer,~~ they extend, from day to day, the circle of their acquisitions, and of their atrocities. The faith of Jesus Christ, his church, his ministers, whatever has a reference to our institutes, our establishment, our influence, continue to be among the first objects of their exterminating fury; and in prosecuting their gigantic plan of changing the face of the earth, and introducing a new order of things, subversive of whatever the world has hitherto most revered, as connected with religion, morals, and civilization, they consider it an essential preliminary to destroy the religion of Christ, and to free the passions from all the restraints, which his gospel has imposed on them.

At home, indeed, we have seen the emissaries of this portentous faction checked by the vigilance of the government, and overawed by the energy and wholesome severity of the legislature. But although the spirit may be suppressed, who can flatter himself that it is subdued? Watchful of every circumstance that could hold out the most distant prospect of success to their cause, these internal enemies of our constitution and establishment have never ceased to tread, as closely, as their opportunities would permit, in the steps of men, to
whose

whose pre-eminence in guilt and usurpation, they look with eyes of envy. As circumstances have varied, they have changed their conduct; their object they have never relinquished. Detected, proscribed, in some instances punished, they have been compelled to lay aside the tone of menace, and to abandon their plans of open violence, and avowed rebellion: But they have only become the more active and indefatigable in all the arts of covert treason, and secret conspiracy; and in an hour, "which threatened" "to fill the land with mourning and woe," we saw them attempt, what they deem the sublimest virtue of their system, and raise their sacrilegious hands against the life of our beloved king.

Such have been the awful judgments of God, to which we have been witnesses, since our last meeting—and such is the state of things, which once more forces itself on our consideration.

Among other calumnies, with which the ministers of the gospel are indiscriminately loaded in these days, when even they, who do not openly profess infidelity, manifest the most torpid indifference to the interests of religion, and are forward to depress the character of its teachers, is that of making their profession
only
subser-

subservient to politics. I, for myself, disclaim the imputation—*You* will disclaim it; and, I am persuaded, that I could not more effectually defeat the salutary purposes which I propose to myself in addressing you this day, than by letting you suppose, for a moment, that I could descend to mix politics with the objects of your meeting. No; I have something very different in view when I call your attention to the unhappy circumstances of the times, and a few words will explain it to you.

Under the deepest impression of the divine displeasure, so obviously extended over a guilty world, our pious and religious sovereign called upon us, some months back, to assemble his people, and to exhort them to humble themselves with him, before the throne of offended justice. Human judgment and human ingenuity, the wisdom and the experience of Man, had exhausted all their resources. Bending before the inscrutable decrees of God, and seeing his hand, visibly, bared before them, and controuling all the efforts of their policy, they, who, in all things else, are gifted to rule the world when it is wildest, confessed at length, * “ that the humbling of the man of the earth,

* See the last Form of Prayer.

“ who

“ who had lifted up his banners against the
 “ Most High,” must be the work of the Most
 High alone. They saw the traces of his wrath,
 in the dearth and in the famine. They saw
 them in the pestilence, where epidemic diseases
 consumed their troops, and the climates seemed
 to be in league with their ferocious enemies *.
 They heard his voice in the winds, controuling
 their commands, and forbidding, as it were,
 their fleets and their armies to carry their plans
 into effect; they heard it in the shouts of tri-
 umphant wickedness, inflicting, at once, and
 suffering the severest visitations, with which the
 Supreme Ruler, in his wrath, could punish his
 guilty and impenitent creatures. All this they
 saw, and all this they acknowledged; and the
 ministers of religion were called upon to unite
 with the governors, and with the people in
 prayers, and supplications, and fastings, that the
 judgments so justly provoked by our sins, might
 be withdrawn. We obeyed the call. We pro-
 claimed the fast. We assembled our several
 congregations. From our pulpits were heard,
 through every part of the land, the most fervent
 and earnest exhortations to “ a dutiful sense of
 “ our God in this time of our visitation;” to

* Alluding to the mortality among the troops in the West
 Indies, and the singular circumstances attending the sailing
 of admiral Christian's fleet.

universal repentance and universal reform, "to
 " the putting away all ungodliness and sinful
 " lusts, and to the holding fast the profession
 " of our faith in purity of heart and mind."
 But while we thus exhorted the people committed to our charge, how did we, for ourselves, attend to the awful injunction? What enquiry did we institute into the share of the general pollution, that might have entered into the sanctuary? How far did each of us, for himself, consider what part he might have had in the national iniquity, that provoked the national punishment? or partaken in the guilt of those priests, of whom the holy prophets of old complained, that they also *had violated the law, and profaned holy things*; that they not only put *no difference*, themselves, and in their own conduct, *between the holy and the profane, between the clean and the unclean*, but that they *shewed it not to others*; *deserving to be made base and contemptible before the people*; that they *should not themselves prosper, and that their flocks should be scattered*.

What a principal share the sins and vices of the priesthood have in drawing down the vengeance of God upon a degenerate people, and provoking national punishment, I hold it unnecessary to remind you. If you could not collect

lect it from the nature of the thing itself, and and from the necessary procedure of the divine œconomy, the proofs of it must be familiar to you from the history of that people, whose records have been preserved to us, in order that from the conduct of God towards them, we might learn the general character of his moral government. In those records we find the vices and disorders of the priests and lying prophets, uniformly represented as the cause at once and the proof of the last stage of insufferable corruption. If the land of Israel had become ripe for punishment at the period of those captivities, which preceded and accompanied the destruction of the first temple, and of the city of Jerusalem, the principal causes of it are declared by the inspired writers, to have been, that both *prophet and priest were prophane. Their wickedness was found in the house of the Lord. The priests violated the law, and prophaned holy things: they said not where is the Lord? and though they handled the law, they knew him not, but transgressed against him, and walked after things that did not prosper. The shepherds fed themselves; they ate the fat, and they clothed themselves with the wool, but they fed not the flock.* Their calamity was, therefore, involved in the calamity of those who are declared to have principally perished through their fault.

Thus

Thus saith the Lord of Israel against the pastors that feed my people. Ye have scattered my flock, and have driven them away; Behold I will visit upon you the evil of your doings. I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, for from the least of them even unto the greatest, every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria, they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing, they walk in lies, they strengthen also the hands of evil doers, that none doth return from his wickedness, they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. Dreadful denunciations! and they were as dreadfully accomplished. How much more are they to be apprehended, from a similar corruption, under that pure and perfect dispensation, in which we serve?

How then can we better promote the objects of our assembling this day, than by enquiring how far we may have to dread our having fallen into that corruption? The object of our assembling this day, is not merely to institute a few formal enquiries, or to conform to an established custom, that has lost all its life, energy and use. We come to these annual meetings for mutual edification,

edification, and mutual assistance. In their main design, they impose an indispensable obligation on the bishop, to give such instructions to the clergy of his diocese, collectively, as the general line of their duty, or the occasional pressure of local and particular circumstances may require of him. How I may discharge my part of this difficult and delicate task, must be ever to me a matter of the liveliest solicitude. I have felt it so, particularly, looking to this our present meeting. It falls on a moment of difficulty and danger, such as we have never known. We must rouse ourselves to meet the crisis. It requires a rougher exercise, and a severer discipline, to strengthen and brace our nerves for it, than we have been accustomed to practise in the seasons of ease, and quiet, and safety, which we have so long enjoyed. *The Lord has, evidently, a controversy with us. Our pleadings must not, therefore, be as in the days, when we were at ease in Zion, and stretched on couches, and chanted to the sound of the viol. We must lift up our voices like trumpets; to awake from transgressions, and to a thorough sense of our state. We did so with the people. We must do so with ourselves. This is the first opportunity of our meeting together since the general humiliation. Let us avail ourselves of it, to enter into that strict and rigorous examination of our own lives* and

and conduct, which we then so earnestly recommended to others. This the world expects from us. This, in my anxiety to select some subject worthy of the time and the occasion, has appeared to me to be the most fitting and becoming us. I trust you will agree with me—I trust you will prepare yourselves to have it laid before you, as men who are in earnest; as men, who, as they wish to deliver truths, wish also to hear truths; and not as those deceivers of themselves, who prefer the soothing accents of prophets, who *prophecy pleasing things*, to the language of the *watchman, who bears the word at the mouth of God, and gives them warning from him*. Such a watchman, as far as my humble endeavours, and acknowledged imperfections will permit, I will labour to prove myself to you this day; and I hope you will hear me with patience and indulgence, while I take a pretty wide field in prosecuting my design.

In order to observe a proper method, and to establish some rule for entering into this awful discussion, my purpose is to call your attention to that day, when you first embraced your profession in the sight of many witnesses, and to take a review of some of the principal vows and obligations, into which you then entered.

In

In this revision, the first material circumstance, that must recur to you, is the answer to the solemn adjuration, that required you to declare in the sight of God, and of his ministers, whether “you thought in your hearts “that you were truly called to the order and “ministry of priesthood?” At first sight, it may seem to be, now, an unprofitable enquiry with what truth or foundation you gave an affirmative answer to this question. You cannot recall the past.—You cannot alter, or retract, whatever of thoughtlessness, precipitancy, or guilt, accompanied this affirmation. That, with every other circumstance attending the solemnity, is now registered against you. But there are two descriptions of persons, to whom a few observations, on this important point, may still be useful.—They, who make no conscience, whatever, of such a question, and are either ignorant or careless of its import, that they may labour to make some atonement for having trifled with, or *lied to the Holy Ghost*; and they, who from a delicate, and too susceptible conscience, may interpret the words in too strict a sense, and terrify themselves into an apprehension of having been guilty of that most heinous crime.

B

You

You must observe, then, that in the question proposed to you, there is an obvious distinction made between an *external* and *internal* call. The *external* call is from the apostolic authority of the bishop, "according to the order of this church of Ireland." The *internal* call is from the influences of the Holy Ghost, "according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The usages observed by the bishop; his proving and examining the persons, he is to ordain; the imposition of hands, for the communication of the Holy Ghost; the commission for preaching the gospel, and the power of dispensing the word of God, and his holy sacraments, are all of apostolical institution. They have been derived, through the apostles, from our Lord himself, and as such, have been adopted into its ritual, by our church. With what care, with what caution, with what diligence and circumspection, the bishop may previously try and examine the persons, to whom he gives this sublime mission; from what motives, and through what influences, he may be induced to open the *door* of Christ's *fold*, for the admission of the *shepherds* of his *flock*, must be, to himself, an awful consideration.—But neither the lawfulness, nor the certainty of

the external call are affected by his motives or his conduct. All, on whom he lays his hands, with the prescribed forms, may safely affirm that they have been “ called according to the “ order of this church of Ireland.”

In judging of the *internal* call, we must carefully avoid the extremes of enthusiasm, on the one side, and on the other, of that laxity of principles, and that absence of all spiritual and christian feeling on those points, which so many allow to themselves. It would, certainly, be presumptuous and dangerous, in embracing our profession, to search for any *sensible* movements, or interference of the Holy Spirit ; any influence or controul, operating on the soul by a *perceptible* impulse. Ours cannot be the confidence to call upon the Lord, *who knows the hearts of all men, to shew, by a visible and indisputable interference, whom he may have chosen to take part of the ministry and apostleship*, as when the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven. We are not to expect that *prophecies should have gone before on us into the world*, as on Timothy, to determine whether this *charge has been committed to us*, in the same fullness, and with the same efficacy, as to that pattern of the pastoral and episcopal character. All we can do is to judge

of our call in a rational manner. We are to look to the ordinary course of Providence, as it determines the different states and conditions of life. We are to estimate the qualifications, with which nature may have fitted us for the profession. And we are to examine our motives and views in embracing it.

The designs of virtuous and religious parents, tracing out for us, with pious and anxious care, our line in life ; their diligence in giving us the education, and cultivating in us the dispositions, best calculated to fit and prepare us for that line ; even the views and wishes of friends and protectors, who, without any unjust, improper, or unbecoming interference, solicitation, or importunity on our part, may have it in their power to give us an establishment in the church, and may have early directed our views and our studies to that object ; a strong propensity and preponderating inclination, early conceived, and assiduously indulged,—all these are to be received as the ordinary interferences of Providence, and by them we may be enabled to form a rational judgment of our calling, as far as they go.

Our next rule is from our qualifications. The strongest indication we can have, of Providence

vidence having designed us for any particular calling in life, is our having received the gifts and talents necessary to answer its ends, and promote its purposes. Now the gifts and talents, necessary for the profession you have embraced, may be considered, either as they are natural or moral. As to the natural gifts, all cannot be apostles; all cannot be evangelists; all cannot be prophets. There must be a diversity of talents, for the different purposes and objects of our ministry. But knowledge to instruct, and discernment to guide, are essential to all God's ministers; and he, who discovers not within himself a capacity for gaining this knowledge, and a promise and prospect of this discernment, has strong reasons to fear that God never designed him to be a teacher among his people.

It is, indeed, justly observed by one of the most primitive bishops of whom the church of Christ could boast, in modern days *, that "more sinners are converted by holy, than by learned men." St. Jerom prefers an holy simplicity to an unsanctified eloquence, and bishop Burnet observes, that "a great measure of piety, with a small proportion of learn-

* Bishop Wilson,

“ing, will go a great way in the usefulness
 “of a minister of the gospel.” Still, however, some proportion is necessary; and the design of our religion being to lead men to the knowledge of the truth that is in Christ Jesus, or to confirm them in it, and the object of our ministry being to promote that design, it is obvious that a capacity to acquire that knowledge ourselves, and the talent to communicate it to others, are preliminary essentials to the qualifying a person to embrace the ministry. By the consciousness, therefore, of every individual, how far he possesses that capacity, or may hope to acquire that talent, he may judge, in this instance, of his calling.

The moral qualifications, as they are, doubtless, the most essential, so are they, also, the more strongly marked. Habits of industry and application, early planted, and assiduously nurtured; habits of sobriety, of temperance, of frugality; decency of demeanour; mildness and suavity of disposition; seriousness of manners; chastened and restrained desires; an inviolable love, and uniform practice of truth; purity and steadiness of principle, and honesty and integrity of heart—I will not assume the confidence to pronounce that in these dregs of christianity, and with this accumulated
 mass

mass of human weaknesses, and human imperfections, with which we are surrounded, no person ought to *lay his hand to the ark of God*, or enter into the *fold* of Christ, as the *shepherd* and *feeder* of his *flock*, whose conscience does not bear him witness, that he vitally and practically possesses all the moral qualifications, which I have here enumerated.—But this I can venture to assert with confidence, that he who does not discover within himself, the seeds and principles of these moral qualifications; that he who, from the experience of his youthful years, has not some assurance of his possessing a temper of mind, and a frame of constitution, fitted to cultivate, cherish and mature them, can never, with safety or truth, affirm, that he “ trusts he is inwardly moved, “ by the Holy Ghost, to undertake the ministry.”

The last rule I mentioned of judging of our calling is, by the views and motives, that may have led us to embrace it. That we should have no view whatever to our temporal advantage, or to our securing to ourselves a suitable establishment in life, when we decide for the clerical profession, is what neither the dictates of nature, nor the temper and spirit of the gospel, require. Nature has laid on all the

necessity of providing for their bodily support; and Providence, evidently, designs that this should be done suitably to the state and condition of life, in which it may place us. St. Paul, indeed, could glory that his "*hands ministered to his necessities*;" and that he was "*not burthensome to the churches*;" but he tells the Corinthians, that the "*Lord himself hath ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel*." This is a principle of justice, as well as religion; and therefore, there can be nothing wrong, either in a moral or Christian light, to propose to ourselves a livelihood out of the vineyard of Christ.

But although this may not militate against the hope of our being called, yet if it has been our only, or even our principal and decided motive, we may rest assured that it has not been in *the will* and designs of Jesus Christ, nor *through him*, that we have *entered into the door*. We must acknowledge ourselves to have engaged as *hirelings*, who care not for *the sheep*, and who have them not in their contemplation: Who looked only to the *profits of the flock*, to *kill them that were fed*, and to sacrifice, without feeling or remorse, their spiritual interests and concerns to our own convenience, our own humours, or our own avaricious and sordid desires.

The

The questions, therefore, which we should, each of us, propose to ourselves, in this self-examination, are these—What had I principally in view, when I embraced my profession? The possessions, and not the functions of the church? Its distinctions, and not the duties they required? The riches of the *fold*, and not the safety of the *sheep*? Did I enter into the ministry, in the sincere desire and resolution to devote my labours, and my talents, to the service of God, the salvation of the souls, that might be committed to my charge, the extending the kingdom of God, and the destruction of the empire of sin and vice; or merely to secure the comforts, conveniences, and enjoyments of an easy, indolent, and independent life? Was it because I could not succeed in any other profession? Because my prospects from that quarter were the most promising; and that my family and my connections, like the mother of Zebedee's children, had made interest to secure to me the first places in Christ's kingdom? Did I quit my *fishing boats and my nets*, an obscure rank in life, and a scanty patrimony, not to accompany my Redeemer, through his laborious and useful mission, but that, like Judas, I might carry the bag, and make a gain of my apostleship, betraying and selling, like him, my Master and his cause?

I have

I have already observed, that any retrospect to these points, or to any other, on which I have touched under this head, can be, now, no otherwise availing, than as it may awake us to a more perfect sense of our situation, and prompt us to make some amends, some atonement for the thoughtlessness, the precipitancy, or the guilt, that may have marked the most important moment, and the most decisive action of our lives. Let him, therefore, who has never yet made a conscience of this question, or the answer he gave to it, now bring it home seriously, and solemnly, to himself. He will never find it too late to apply to the throne of mercy. In sincerity of repentance, and true contrition, he may find a new call: by amendment of life, and vigorous exertions, he may deserve, although entering at so late an hour, to receive from the Lord of the Vineyard, when the evening comes, a labourer's hire.

As to him, whose conscience may alarm him too sensibly, if, in the reflections I have submitted to him, he finds not sufficient reason to calm his disquietude, I have this plain rule, further, to suggest to him. Let him ask himself, whether he is persuaded that he *now* professes the *spirit* of his *calling*,—That in sincerity of intention, earnestness of desire, and activity of

of zeal, he has *now* nothing to reproach himself; and, if the result of the enquiry be satisfactory to his conscience, let him go on in quiet, and humbly trust in the mercies of him, with whom he has to do, for grace and acceptance.

The next important points, on which we should call ourselves to account, are *the persuasion*, we declared ourselves to be impressed with, that the “scriptures contain all doctrine required
“ of necessity for eternal salvation,” and *the vow* we made “to instruct the people committed to our charge, out of the said scriptures,
“ and to teach nothing but that which, we
“ should be persuaded, could be concluded and
“ proved by the scripture.”

With what awe, and dread, must every man, who has, in any degree, a feeling of the obligations, to which he binds himself, on an appeal to the eternal God, weigh every expression of such a declaration and vow, when registered against himself? To have been persuaded, that the holy scriptures contained sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation, was it not to be supposed, that we had studied and known them? To have vowed, that, out of them, we should instruct the people committed to our charge, and to teach them nothing but what

what, we should be persuaded, might be concluded and proved by them, must it not have been to be presumed that we were, ourselves, intimately acquainted with all that they contained, both as to doctrine and to practice, and that we were fitted and prepared to teach them to others? Were we so acquainted with the scriptures? Were we so fitted and prepared?

As a supplement to this declaration, and these vows, and looking to the future to make atonement for, or to improve on the past, we *further* bound ourselves “to be diligent in reading of
“ the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as
“ help to the knowledge of the same, laying
“ aside the study of the world and the flesh.” Have we, since *this* vow has been upon us, laboured with all the care and assiduity, which so sacred an obligation required, to qualify ourselves to fulfil it? Have we exerted the diligence, which we so solemnly promised to God? Or, have we gone on without thought, without remorse, without feeling the slightest rub of conscience, as if we did not live in a state of habitual *lying to the Holy Ghost*, nor continued in the same ignorance and neglect of the holy scriptures, and “of every study connected with them,” with which we dared to approach to this solemn and exclusive dedication of ourselves,
our

our time, and our talents to the service of God? If the answer to these questions must condemn any amongst us, where shall be our resource against such criminal prevarication? Against such deliberate and persevering mockery of what the most languid and lukewarm of the common faithful, who are taught to look to us for instruction and example, would reverence and revere? Where will be the resource of him, who appears to have considered the moment, when he first bound himself in these vows, as the moment that was to give him a release from every study, to which he had been confined, while under the tutelage and direction of others? Who considered the commission he then received, and which the purest and the best might well tremble either to give or to receive, as dispensing with him from all further attention to mental or spiritual improvement; as a title to pursue whatever the world could offer, to occupy, or amuse him? He vowed to lay aside the study of the world, and the flesh. God and angels, and good men were witnesses to the vow. But from that moment he began most assiduously to cultivate that study, and every succeeding day gave some new proof of his success and proficiency. He sees all of his own age and standing, who began the business of life with him, uniformly engaged in improving them-

themselves in the several qualifications and acquirements, that are essential to their success, in the profession they have embraced—He alone looks not for his success to any labour, or assiduity, in the business of his profession—He is satisfied to exhibit to the public a walking picture of idleness, of trifling, of insignificancy, of dissipation. Who so assiduous, so known, or so active, at every place of public resort and dissipated amusement? Who so famous in the chace, or in the field? or so known in the kennel, or the stable? Who so expert at every game of chance, or of skill? or so earnestly courted and desired in those circles, where all the vices, and all the meanness of gambling are practised under more plausible appearances, and more imposing names? Who can boast a stronger constitution to bear the consequences of excess? or a more lengthened devotion, at the table of the dissolute? Who better qualified to give life to every licentious, prophane, and loose conversation? Who more versed or successful in all the arts of adulating the great? or ministering to their vices, and of encouraging and countenancing them, in their neglect and contempt of every thing connected with religion?

But you are of a more serious, grave, and reserved disposition. Yours is not this fluttering,

ing, idle, trifling character; much less this open dissoluteness of manners, and this shameless renunciation of every thing you owe to your station and profession. Granted—But have you been the more mindful of your vows? To what have you devoted your time, your thoughts, and your talents, since you first entered into them? A slave to every thing that can promote your temporal interests; drudging with indefatigable industry in improving the property, which the piety of former days annexed to the office you fill, that you might have no cares to withdraw you from the duties it requires; early to rise, and late to take your rest; sinking the character of the clergyman in that of the man of business, and the griping money maker, what leisure have you left to yourself for that “diligence in the reading of the scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of them,” which, deliberately, and of your own seeking, you vowed to your God. Thinking only to *live of the gospel, and the things of the temple*, what time do you devote to acquire a knowledge of the gospel, or to fit yourselves properly to minister in *holy things*? *You eat the fat, and you clothe yourselves, and your families, with the wool*—You are authorised to do so—It is in the intention of God and man that you should—But do you ever think how you are to qualify

qualify yourselves to *feed* them? Have you ever learned how to *strengthen the diseased*? to *heal that which is sick*? to *bring back again that which was given away*? or to *seek that which was lost*? To what do your labours, in that way, extend, beyond the compiling or copying a Sunday sermon, without selection, and without attending either to the understanding, the feelings, or the circumstances of your congregation? Yet you set your conscience at ease; and you join in condemning the dissolute, and the profligate, of your profession; and you accuse them of their breach of vows.—But your own breach of vows you will not discern: You will not admit the sacrilege you are guilty of, in seizing, and enjoying the *things that are sacred*, without ever qualifying yourself, by any course of appropriate studies, or professional application, to discharge the duties, for which these *sacred things* are due.

Are these descriptions drawn from fancy? Are they the exaggerations of a morose, splenetic and censorious mind? Of the accuser of his brethren, or one who would countenance their accusers? Would to God they were! Would to God that *this horrible thing* was not to be seen in our *Jerusalem*! That there are so many exceptions to them is, and I hope, ever

ever will be our consolation, our stay, and our support. Should the general character of our clergy ever sink into this extreme of degeneracy, he knows nothing of his religion, who would not tremble in the conviction, that like the Jewish Priests of old, and, perhaps, like others of a more recent date, we too were to be *made base and contemptible before the people, and were to feed ourselves no more.* In vain should we hope, that a few characters, preserving themselves untainted and blameless, should by their intercession, their prayers, or their exertions, avert the terrible calamity.—*Though Moses and Samuel stood before God, yet his mind could not be towards such a description of clergy. Were Noah, Daniel, and Job among them, they should deliver but their own souls, by their own righteousness.* He would not hear them, nor would he spare the rest, for *their sakes.*

The engagements we have been hitherto considering, respect our own instruction and proficiency in the sacred scriptures.—By those, we are next to consider, we are equally bound to explain their doctrines, communicate their spirit, and inculcate their obligations to others, wherever, or in whatever manner, we shall be called upon, by our situation in the ministry. This should be the great end and object of all our

C

learn-

learning. To *give attendance to reading*, with a view to make a display of our scriptural knowledge, and to raise a name to ourselves for scriptural erudition, is a poor vanity, and has its own reward. The obligation of *our ministry* is to *give attendance to reading*, with a view to *exhortation and to doctrine; by the manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*. The duty thus incumbent on us may be divided into two heads. Public instruction or preaching; and private monition and occasional exhortation. The seasons for public instruction are with us settled and regular. They consult, in imitation of the divine condescension, the leisure of the great body of the faithful, and their vacation from all worldly labour and occupation. They are prescribed to us at such intervals, as, without breaking in too often on the indispensable pursuits of life, are not so distant as to suffer their impressions to be weakened, or effaced. They are of equal obligation with the prayers and service of the sabbath, (which are, in themselves, a material and most impressive part of public instruction) and it is enjoined by the Canon, that “every beneficed person, allowed
“to be a preacher, shall, in his own cure, preach
“one sermon ever Sunday in the year.”

It does not come within our present purpose, to consider of any general rules for public instruction ; but, in instituting the comparison between our obligations and our practice, which I am recommending, it is obvious that we must consider not only our fidelity to our engagements, but also the manner in which we acquit ourselves of them. We are not accountable for talents, which we have not received. *The spirit of God divideth to every man severally as he will.* It is only in proportion to what every man shall have received, that it shall be required of him. But in the *preaching of the cross, which is unto them that perish foolishness, but which, unto those that are saved, is the power of God, and the wisdom of God,* pure intentions go further than great talents, and unpretending zeal than extensive learning. It was not with *excellency of speech or of wisdom*, that they who converted the world to Christianity came declaring the testimony of God. *Their speech and their preaching was not with perishable words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit, that their faith might stand only in the power of God.* That spirit, and that power, we are instructed where, and how, to seek. *To know of the doctrine whether it be of God, we have only to do God's will.* If any of you lack wisdom, says St. James, let him ask of God, who giveth to every man liberally, and up-

braideth not, and it shall be given him. I have more understanding than the ancients, says the Psalmist, because I keep thy precepts. Humble and earnest prayer, and a life suitable to his profession, are therefore the never-failing sources, from which every minister may hope, not only to draw truth and light and life for himself, but also to be enabled to communicate them to others. We cannot, therefore, seek for an excuse for our neglect, our remissness, our languor, our want of success in discharging the duty of public instruction, by pleading a want of great talents. To love the word is to understand it. The knowledge of whatever it contains most excellent and sanctifying, is sooner to be gained by a sincere desire, followed by a suitable application, than by a commanding capacity, or a comprehensive genius. The talent of communicating it, lies more in the ardor of zeal, than in the glow of eloquence; or rather, in this instance, zeal only is eloquence. *I may speak with the tongues of men and of angels; I may understand all mysteries and all knowledge, yet if I profess not, nor impress others with a conviction that I possess, an ardent zeal for the glory of God, a pure and disinterested love for his word, an earnest desire of establishing the kingdom of his Son, and whatever else I possess in my function, as a public teacher, I am become as a sound-*
ing

ing brass, or as a tinkling cymbal. I preach my own word, and not the word of God. My labours are as vain, as the instruments, I employ, are light, noisy, and empty.

But, in thus considering the spirit, that should animate our public instructions, we must go yet further. If to love the word of God be to understand it; to practise it, is to teach it. If we mean to preach well, we must live well. To inculcate any duty with effect, we must begin by fulfilling it.—Precepts and admonition require many things, as well in the teacher as in those that are instructed, which all cannot possess. They consequently may be, and they too often are, useless and ineffectual. But manners and deportment are arguments, which all men comprehend. They speak as well to the senses, as to the understanding. Many, who might not discern the beauty of speculative truths, however splendidly, or eloquently recommended, yield to the eloquence of example. Lessons of morality and virtue, of which the living comment is seen in the corresponding conduct of those who deliver them, find an easy access to the heart, and the impressions they make, are both lasting and operative. It was only on an assurance of his own conversion, that our Saviour laid his injunctions on St. Peter to

strengthen his brethren. When he gave him commission to *feed his sheep*, it was not until he had drawn from him repeated asseverations, that he loved him. All this is in the natural order of things: for, what can be more preposterous, than to recommend the love of that to others, which, it is obvious, we do not ourselves love? What can be more absurd, than to pretend to labour for the conversion of others, as a matter in which we take the warmest interest, whilst we manifestly shew, that we are altogether indifferent about our own?—To condemn the vices we commit, and recommend virtues, which all, who know us, know we never practise? *Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?*

To whatever we may attempt thus preposterously, our hearers will apply what the critic says of those monstrous and incongruous things which are sometimes exhibited on the theatre. *Quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.* The natural consequence of such hypocrisy, or such effrontery, is, contempt for the preacher, and a disbelief of all he asserts, or teaches. Persons, otherwise well instructed,
and

and whose opinions of virtue and religion, have been early formed, and solidly established, will, indeed, know how to distinguish between the character of the teacher, and the truths he disgraces: They will despise and abhor the one, without being tempted to disbelieve, or reject, the other. But how will it be with the ignorant and uninstructed? How will it be with the poor and the simple, who form so great a portion of those committed to our charge? The instructions of their minister are their chief, their only comment on their gospel. Tied down, by the order of Providence, to gain their daily bread by their daily labour, and their intervals, on ordinary days, being barely sufficient to recruit their strength, and afford them necessary refreshment, it is from their minister alone, that they look for a knowledge of their duty. It is from their minister alone, that they expect instructions how to fulfil it. But, what instructions can that minister convey to them, to whose vicious and disorderly life, they are daily witnesses? Can he inspire them with a detestation of what they daily see him practise, without shame or remorse? Can he impress them with a terror of the fatal consequences of those sins, in which they see him persist, without fear or apprehension? Or, awake them from that indifference to the concerns of another

life, which he betrays in the whole tenor of his conduct? Can they believe what, to live as he does, they conclude he must himself disbelieve? Or, can they honour and venerate, what he openly treats with indifference and neglect? No; instead of a *light to guide* them, he is a *snare* to them, in *all his ways*. Instead of strengthening their faith, he weakens it. The word of God, so powerful in its effects, not only loses all its efficacy, when falling from his lips, but is heard with contempt and disgust, and its *only fruit* is to *turn men* to impiety, irreligion, and a consequent depravity of morals. His ministry is considered as a trade, and is despised; and his religion as a fable, in which he himself disbelieves, and is rejected. Thus, the name of God is blasphemed through him, wretched man! and thus, the sins of a whole people are laid to his charge. Do we not every day feel and experience this, my respectable brethren? Where is the free-thinker, or avowed Atheist, who, involving the whole order in his opinion of individuals, does not reproach us with disbelieving what we preach, and thereupon justify his own incredulity? Where is the libertine who does not plead the example of some vicious and immoral clergyman, to excuse the excesses with which we reproach him?

But

But, there is another point of view, in which I have often considered this matter, and that is, how a man himself must feel, under all the consciousness of the appearance he makes, in such circumstances. Behold him, in the desk, the organ and the voice of God's people. Their intercessor before the throne of grace, offering up in their name, and in their behalf, prayers and praises, supplications and thanksgivings, sighs of repentance, and cries for pardon. Hear him in the pulpit, rehearsing some happy effusion of piety and zeal, which he has copied (if he takes the trouble even of copying it) from the works of some worthy minister, whose talents and acquirements have been all directed to the instruction and edification of the faithful. I will not divert your attention to consider, in the desk, his distracted thoughts, his wandering looks, his irreverent attitudes, his careless, hasty, unintelligible recitation; I will not divert your attention to consider, in the pulpit, with what a cold and icy tongue, he chills the divine ardour, that probably glows in every line of the original he has copied. In what sleepy tones, and palsying accents, he repeats expressions of irresistible force and energy, when accompanied by the spirit that originally dictated them, and which, coming *from* the heart, are so calculated to make their way *to* the

the heart. What I now chiefly wish you to contemplate, is the conscience and feeling of such a man, in such a situation. Can he repeat a prayer, in the name of the people, and not feel that they must consider it as a mockery, both to heaven and to themselves? Is there a duty he can recommend, with the breach of which, he must not feel that some of his hearers must be, at that moment, condemning *him*? Is there a virtue he can enforce, which his too faithful memory must not place some hearer before him, who knows him to have outraged? Is there a vice he can stigmatize, with which, some guilty associate, or indignant witness, must not reproach him? To what face can he look, on which he must not expect to see a sneer or a frown? What eye can he meet, in which he must not expect to read either scorn or indignation? Now, I beseech you, what can we suppose so humiliating, so tormenting, as the mind of such a man, so circumstanced? Under what excruciating restraint, must he discharge his public functions? There is, indeed, a point, where he may enjoy a fatal calm. We may, indeed, suppose him arrived at that deplorable stage of degeneracy, when the frequency of those mortifying reflections has rendered his heart callous—When tired of the combat between his conscience and his passions, between the sense of shame

and the violence of vicious propensities, he becomes so determined and barefaced in his contempt of whatever is decent and consistent, that he sets all public opinion at defiance, and even ridicules what, if he practised them, we might almost call the *virtues* of hypocrisy and dissimulation.

If this picture, when taken altogether, be too strongly drawn for any general application, as I trust it is, yet it will be essential towards our present object, to consider it, in its different parts and shades. Happy are they to whom, in no instance, and in no degree, it can present their own likeness.

From our public office and functions, let us pass to the private duties, to which we stand pledged, by the vows we are now considering. One of the most dangerous errors, into which we can fall, is to endeavour to persuade ourselves, that regularly to discharge the first, or to provide others to discharge it, is the great object of our ministry; whereas, in truth, all its vital efficacy, and whatever, within the whole circle of its obligations, is most binding, and of the strictest necessity, and most extensive utility, is to be sought for, in the more private and ordinary offices of the pastoral function,

tion. Our vow to that purpose takes in a wide field—"To use both public and private ministrations and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole, within our cures, as need shall require, or occasion shall be given."

How many things must this vow suppose us to attend to, which we ought solemnly to put to our conscience, in the hour of self-examination? It is obvious, that the obligations it lays upon us, are personal. Nothing can be more obviously personal. There is not the most distant reservation, for any vicarious discharge of the duties, it imposes. Voluntarily, after the most solemn admonitions, the maturest deliberation, in the sight and hearing of God and of man, we vowed to watch every necessity, and seize every occasion, *within our cures*, of discharging these duties. What can more essentially suppose our *presence within our cures*? What can more necessarily suppose *personal* exertions? Yet there are those, could it be believed! with whom, it is necessary to interpose the whole weight of our episcopal jurisdiction, to enforce the observation of so solemn a vow?—Yet there are those, bound by this vow, who, although yielding to our authority, and living on their cures, consider the duties, here undertaken, to belong only to the

more subordinate, and less fortunately provided for, amongst their brethren. To the public service of the church, are annexed higher ideas, a more conspicuous exhibition; a scene more favourable to ambition and vanity, a more compendious duty, and less trouble. But to pay a constant and scrupulous attention to the individuals, who compose our flock; to acquire an intimate acquaintance with their persons, and their families; to make *our voice* so familiar to them, by frequent converse and intercourse, that they may *know it*, as *the sheep know the voice of the true shepherd*; to yield to every necessity, and embrace every occasion of giving private “monition and exhortation to the sick and to the well;” to “teach and admonish the one,” to alleviate the sufferings, soothe the sorrows, awake the contrition, animate the hopes, strengthen the faith, and calm the dying moments of the other; to *go about constantly doing good*, visiting frequently from house to house, accommodating differences, and “promoting quietness, peace and love, among all who are under our charge,” as we are bound by another part of our vows; to give baptism to infants, catechetical instruction to the rising generation, and, what nature herself instructs the survivors to look to for comfort and soothing, burial to the dead—In short, to perform all the offices

offices of a resident minister, with what, in the accommodating language of the times, we comprehend under the description of occasional duties—these, the most weighty and important objects of our function and charge, are considered as low and servile cares. They are, often, made the object of a disgraceful traffic, to be vicariously discharged, at the most scanty allowance, for which the possessor of any contiguous cure can be found to undertake them; or they are, not seldom, left to chance, and to the overflowings of charity in others.

These are abuses, which we cannot conceal from ourselves; and, there is no point of view, in which we can consider them, that they are not pregnant with evil. When we look to the causes of the extinction of the Church of Rome, in so many countries, at the time of the reformation, the declarations, even of their own historians, will direct us to search for them, principally, in the neglect of their clergy to attend to their parochial duties, and to the more private, and ordinary obligations of the pastoral care. To swell the pomp, and decorate the pageantry, of their public ceremonies, and to run through a number of ritual forms, and stated offices, they considered to be all their duty; and it became their sole employment. To
every

every other care insensible and indolent, their higher orders became strangers, and their lower, a scandal, to their flocks. The latter, compelled from their circumstances to reside amongst them, distinguished themselves from the people, only by gross sensualities, and low debaucheries. The former mixed only with those, whose fortune and situation would advance their interests, minister to their pleasures, or promote their amusements. A gay, voluptuous, ambitious, covetous, intriguing, worldly-minded clergy issued, regularly, from a formal display of the public observances, enjoined by custom, or law, to an incessant round of idleness, dissipation, and vice, or to the pursuits of avarice or ambition. Wearied and disgusted with such a perversion of *holy things*, the people began, at length, to view them with contempt and hatred; and when, under the influence of the reformation, and the guidance of the blessed spirit, a different description of ministers arose, the defection from them was rapid and general *.

I will

* That this defection was not universal, we must agree with Bishop Burnet, in ascribing to the strict and rigorous discipline, which the dangers that beset them, compelled the heads of that church, to establish and enforce among the parochial clergy. The council of Trent, as that prelate observes, rivetted, indeed, the chains of the clergy, and
 continued
 perpetuated

I will not go out of my way to enquire into the political or local circumstances, that, originally, prevented the introduction of this happy reformation among our ancestors, as extensively, as in the sister kingdom. But it comes immediately within our purpose to enquire into the causes, to which we are to attribute the pertinacious prevalency of the Roman Catholic religion amongst us, and how it has maintained its influence over the great bulk of our people, even down to our own times. It had to struggle against the strong hand of the laws. It had to struggle against the menaces, and the allurements of the government; against the rigors, by which men were deterred from adhering to a persecuted cause, and the promises, by which they were invited to abandon it. It had to struggle against what is more powerful than all these, the light of reason, and the force of truth! How is it, then, that it still remains the religion of the greater number amongst us? To what cause must we ascribe this obstinacy of centuries, amidst so many im-

perpetuated the spiritual darkness of the people. But by the reform, which it introduced among the clergy, and which it enforced, by arming the papal hand with new and stronger powers to launch the thunders of the Vatican, it enabled them, in many places, to regain the popular opinion, and so to uphold the tottering fabric of their establishment.

pediments

pediments and difficulties? Can there be a doubt about the cause? Their clergy are indefatigable. Their labours are unremitting. They live in a constant and familiar intercourse with all who are subject to their pastoral inspection. They visit them from house to house. Their only care, their sole employment, is to attend to the administration of their sacraments, and to their multiplied observances and rites. They watch and surround the beds of the sick. They are *instant in season, and out of season—they reprove, they rebuke, they exhort*; certainly, with *long-suffering*, and with *doctrine*, such as it is.—“*They are wise,*” observes Archbishop Secker*, “*in their generation*, and if we hope to be a “match for them, we must imitate them.” If we hope to succeed in our good cause, we must come down to an emulation with them, in exertions that are worthy only of that cause. An emulation, not of envy or strife; not of angry controversy, or disputation; not of any intemperance of proselytism, where the idle contest is merely to swell the numbers of nominal votaries, without making better christians, or better subjects, and with the continued breach of christian charity and benevolence; but an

* In his sermon, preached before the society corresponding with the Incorporated Society in Dublin, for promoting English Protestant Working Schools in Ireland.

emulation in the faithful, earnest and persevering discharge of such pastoral duties, as are most calculated to secure us the respect, the love, the attachment, and the confidence of our flocks.

In this most desirable contest, what advantages do we not enjoy over them, to animate and encourage us? It may be said, and it is said, that they labour for their daily bread.—This cannot be said of us—our establishments depend on no contingencies. They are not merely proportioned to our occasional labours, or personal exertions. They are fixed and permanent as the laws, by which they are secured to us. We shall, therefore, have the advantage of being thought to be more disinterested. We shall have the advantage of not being supposed to be influenced by any motives, but those of kindness, and christian charity, and a sense and feeling of our duty. Their clergy are in general taken out of the lower classes of society. Their means of subsistence keep them within the more obscure walks of life. Now, who does not know the superiority of influence, which a higher station, a more distinguished name, and more affluent circumstances, give among the great bulk of mankind? How much wider a field they open for exertion, and to how many excellent

excellent purposes they are powerful, even in our profession, when under the guidance and influence of the true spirit of the ministry? The more exalted your family, and the more distinguished your name, with the greater weight and authority can you arraign the pride of place, the fastidiousness of birth, and the insolence of riches—the surer prospect you have of bending down, by your precepts, and by your example, the stiff necks of the great to the meek and humble temper of the gospel; the less reason is there to fear that you will sacrifice your duty to adulation; that you will servilely connive at the vices of men in power and authority, or encourage them in their unjust and disorderly conduct, from a dread of their resentment, or with a view to their protection. These privileges, and these facilities, the clergy of the other persuasion amongst us, cannot possess; and if they did possess them, they have not many occasions to avail themselves of them, for any purposes of morality or religion.

Amongst the inferior orders, you may exercise your ministry with a still greater superiority of advantages. Experience proves how strongly disposed the lower classes of men are to think lightly of instructions, exhortations, or rebukes, coming from persons of their own

level, and in whom they discover no distinguishing advantages of place, power, or wealth. A singular character for piety and devotion; a fervor of zeal, manifestly proceeding from the divine spirit, and supported and invigorated by the divine grace, will, indeed, bear down all such obstacles. The religion, of which we are the ministers, was, originally, propagated in opposition to them. But in the ordinary course of things, and in our age, it requires all the force of superstition on weak and ignorant minds to secure any authority to such teachers; and when once they lose that hold, we see by the sad experience of our own days, that they lose all influence and controul over their emancipated votaries. But when they see you descend from, what may be called, your situation in civil society, and appear amongst them in no other character than that of *the shepherd and pastor of their souls*; when you call them by their names; when they know your voice; when you visit their humble roofs; when you attend their sick beds; when you cheerfully and assiduously minister to their spiritual and temporal wants; when you console, when you instruct, when you direct; when, descending to the level of their understanding, and consulting their feelings, you *feed* them, and their children, with *the bread of life*, the word of God—when
you

you daily appear before them in all the varying charities of this endearing character, what have you not to expect from their veneration, their gratitude, and their attachment? How poor must his conceptions be, whose mind is not enlarged and elevated by the reflexion that he possesses the power of accomplishing these benevolent, humane, god-like purposes? How mean must be his thoughts, who can consider them to be mean employments? Where is the name to which they would not add lustre? and what rank, however low in the scale of human distinctions, would they not exalt?

* “ For as much,” then, “ as your office is
 “ of so great excellency, you see with how
 “ great care and study you ought to apply your-
 “ selves, that you may shew yourselves dutiful
 “ and thankful unto the Lord, who hath placed
 “ you in so high a dignity; and that you may
 “ never cease your labor, your care and dili-
 “ gence, until you have done all that lieth in
 “ you, according to your bounden duty, to
 “ bring all such as are committed to your
 “ charge, unto that agreement in the faith and
 “ knowledge of God, and to that ripeness, and
 “ perfectness of age in Christ, that there be

* See the form of Ordination.

“no place left among you, either for error in
“religion, or vicioufness in life.”

Does this labor—this care—this diligence, affright you? Alas! then, you should never have embraced your profession. You should never have accepted a benefice, that was only given for this office. You should never have looked *to reap* where you never meant *to sow*. You but defraud the faithful entrusted to you, and unjustly hold the place of some good, pious, and conscientious minister, who would have been to them “a wholesome and godly example and pattern to follow.”

And after all, what is this labor? Compare what Protestant ministers have to do in the ordinary occupations of their profession, in this kingdom, and the calls from their pastoral care to which they are liable, with those of the clergy of the other persuasion—with those of their own brethren, in countries, where the people are all, fortunately, Protestant. What a comparatively small part of their time would the most conscientious and minute attention to the duties, of which I have been reminding you, require of them, in the families, under their care, that are scattered through their respective parishes? What portion of the week
would

would it take from their other decent and becoming cares, as parents, as friends, as neighbours?—Look to the other professions. Mark the assiduity, the confinement of the soldier—the sacrifice of inclination, of will, of natural propensities, to his duty; his exhausting fatigues, and dangerous toils—Mark the incessant labors of the lawyer. What pains? What study? What a slavery? How he encreases, from day to day, the necessity of renewed application, while every advance he makes in his practice serves only as a new incitement to his exertions, and he, only, labors the more assiduously, to acquire a more thorough knowledge of his profession, and a greater aptitude to display it—And is the minister of God alone to lead an indolent, idle, and unprofitable life? or to waste his days in studies and pursuits that are totally unconnected with his sacred and exalted profession, and in many instances destructive of its spirit, and subversive of its objects?

On this exhausted subject of self-examination, I have dwelt so long, that I will not take up much more of your time, in reminding you of the remaining obligations and vows to which you stand pledged. They are chiefly, the diligence with which you bound yourselves, first, “to banish and drive away all erroneous and

“ strange doctrines, contrary to God’s word;
 “ 2dly, to frame and fashion yourselves and
 “ your families according to the doctrine of
 “ Christ, and to make both yourselves and
 “ them, as much as in you lieth, wholesome
 “ examples and patterns to the flock of Christ;
 “ and, 3dly, reverently to obey your ordinary
 “ and other chief ministers, unto whom is
 “ committed the charge and government over
 “ you.”

With regard to the first, it is impossible to
 have a love for the *truth that is in Christ Jesus*,
 and not feel an ardent desire and anxiety to
 bring others to the knowledge of it. Convinced
 of its importance to ourselves, and of the danger
 of those who fall into error and deception, on
 the great fundamental articles it inculcates, it is
 of the very essence of its charitable spirit, that
 we should be desirous of leading them into those
 paths, where we may all meet in “ the unity of
 that spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righ-
 teousness of life.” But the spirit of the world
 is so apt to mix itself with the spirit of the
 gospel—we are so liable to mistake the impulses
 of our own temper, dispositions, and prejudices,
 for the demands of duty, and the calls of true
 zeal, that it requires the utmost caution and
 circumspection, to prevent our good intentions
 from

from betraying us into error on this important point.

This is true in all cases ; but, from circumstances peculiar to this country, we, of all our brethren, stand most in need of some determined and prudent rule, to guide us in our discharge of this part of our vows, and in whatever else is connected with our intercourse with those *that are from without*, and who dissent from our church. There is, indeed, one point on which there can be no doubt or difficulty. If, from a neglect of duty, or the scandal of our lives, depriving us of the confidence, the respect, and the affection of our flock ; if, by abandoning them in their illness, or, when reluctantly submitting to the formality of visiting them, by our disappointing (from a want of due preparation to discharge such a duty) the anxiety with which they call on us for spiritual assistance and support ; if, by their looking to us, in vain, for those rites which are “ the badges, the “ union, and the support of christians ;” if, by having suffered their dead to depart life, without any comfort of sacrament, and their remains to be deposited, without any decency of christian burial ; if, by the difficulty of getting baptism for their infants, and the neglect of all public or private instructions to their children ; if by
these

these, or any such delinquencies or omissions, as parochial ministers, we suffer one of the least of Christ's brethren to be perverted from the purity of his faith, and to be deceived into error in doctrine, or superstition in worship, heavy must the guilt lie upon our souls. The victim of our negligence may plead, before the throne of mercy, the sincerity of his intentions, and the simplicity of his heart; but, either there is no truth in the gospel, or God will require his soul at our hands.

Making converts, is a matter of another nature. As it is generally managed, it is a bustle of silly vanity or self interest, to encrease, by every artifice, and by every method however unlawful, or unbecoming, the number of disciples, without any endeavours to better their morals.—It is to proselyte, and not to reform. This belongs not to the temper of our church. We have not so learned the truth that is in Christ Jesus. Our wish is, that all who hear us, may be *altogether such as we are*, and our obligation is to enlighten and instruct, all who will hear us: But we exercise no tyranny over any man's judgment, any man's conscience: We make no monopoly of the blood and merits of Christ, nor contract those arms that were expanded for the redemption of the human race:

We

We do not blasphemously seat ourselves in the throne of God, nor prescribe to the divine justice, whom it shall exclude from divine mercy. A spirit of universal charity, a spirit of universal toleration towards such as profess the faith and doctrine of Christ, is the genuine spirit of the reformation. If amongst us, from the pressure of civil and political considerations, and from different parties being, once, distinguished by a difference in religion, the interference of the laws seemed for a time to offer violence to that spirit, the pressure was no sooner removed, and the severities essential to the safety of the family on the throne, and to the preservation of our constitution, appeared to have become unnecessary, than the mild and forbearing genius of Protestantism regained its ascendancy. The codes of pains and penalties, for which it was, falsely, made responsible by its enemies, was removed. Its influence operated, uncontrouled, on our public councils; and the foundations of the public peace were laid in the promise and prospect of that general charity and benevolence, which ought to be the distinction of all, who call themselves christians.

Such is the spirit, by which we are to be guided; such are the examples, we shall ever give to all, who profess to be the ministers of
the

the gospel. Never shall it be said of us, that we outrage the spirit of christian charity, by controversial broils, or proselyting vehemence. The only contest, in which we shall engage, is a contest of zeal in opposing the torrent of irreligion and impiety that is breaking in upon the whole christian world; in reclaiming the different orders and classes of men, from the vices which are drawing down the judgments of God upon us all; in promoting, among the higher ranks, more respect and attention to the religion of Christ, to which they are to look for their safety; and among the lower, the habits of sobriety, temperance, industry, and contentedness, inculcated by that gospel, to which they are to look for their happiness. Should we meet with no returns of liberality, (which in general, we should hope, is not to be apprehended), should others decline all co-operation and communion of exertions in the general cause, to which we invite them, still let us not grow *weary or faint in our work of love*. Still *walking in the meekness* of Christ, let the arms of our warfare be only such as he has prepared for us, and let us leave the event to him.

By an exemplariness of life, worthy of our character; by an unremitting application to the duties of our profession; by doing every office
of

of charity and benevolence, according to our abilities, to every denomination of christians, while our ministerial labours are particularly directed to the improvement of the morals, and the confirmation of the faith among those of our own communion; by these and suchlike acts we shall, most assuredly, gain, by degrees, on the universal estimation: We shall, by degrees, remove every prejudice and confute every calumny, that may be raised against us: We shall force those who have been embittered against our church, by artful insinuations, to think better of it. They will see that it is impossible, that a church, in whose ministers they discover so much of the genuine spirit of christianity, in conduct and practice, can be false in its doctrines, or damnable in its communion. They will be more ready to consider the grounds, on which they are directed to shun all communication or intercourse with it. They will be invited to look into its texture and frame without prejudice, and to weigh its pretensions to a purer form of faith, and a more perfect conformity with the primitive doctrines of the christian church, without that superstitious dread, which has been so long artfully infused into them, as if it were an unpardonable crime even to try and examine it.

What

What a point this will be to be gained, I need not remark to you; or what an effectual mode it must prove of observing the vow, and fulfilling the engagement which we are now considering. We have every thing to hope from unprejudiced investigation, and fair, rational enquiry. Like him in the poet, whom the hostile gods of his enemies had enveloped in night and darkness, all we have to ask is that light and day may be restored, to secure the success of what we account that *sound form of words*, which has been handed down by faithful witnesses.

The next remaining vow we are to consider, is that by which we bound ourselves to "make ourselves and families, as much as in us lies, wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ."—The whole tenor of what I have been saying before you, will apply to that part of this vow, which regards ourselves. We are accountable in a manner, that others are not accountable. It is not negative virtues alone, and an exemption from gross and scandalous sins, that our profession requires. *The Lord will be sanctified in them that come near him.* What might not deserve censure in others, may be highly culpable in us; and we are as punishable for omissions, as others are for actual guilt.

There

There is in our ministry a vivifying principle, producing life, and vigour, and fruitfulness in Christ's vineyard, which, if we do not possess, we may be said to be dead in it. This is the beautiful parable of our Saviour, "Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its flavour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."— This is our punishment, even from the world. Even the world expects, that every thing about us should bear the stamp and impression of our ministry, and that its spirit should breathe in every act of our lives; and when that stamp is effaced, and that spirit extinguished, all reverence, all respect, all confidence is withdrawn. We no longer possess or credit, or esteem, or influence. *We have lost our flavour, and are trodden under foot of men.* Our instructions are disregarded, our churches abandoned, our rights disputed, our claims resisted, and our whole order vilified and run down, not only as useless, but as a burden to the public.

This neglect of keeping alive amongst us a spirit of profession, must be one of our worst evils. In all the other liberal professions, they who have engaged in them, feel a pride in being known to possess certain requisites, that are essen-

essentially connected with them. They love to be distinguished and marked, as peculiarly belonging to them. There is a habit, a manner, a style of conversation, which they think it incumbent on them to incorporate with the ordinary polish of a gentleman, and to adopt and communicate to each other. Whence comes it that there are such different impressions on this subject among so many of our brethren? Why should there be found in the most useful, and, when properly filled, the most dignified of all the professions, members, who, instead of glorying in possessing the spirit of their profession, place a preposterous pride in being supposed not to possess it? Who make it their study to retain as little as possible of either the dress, or the manner, or the style of conversation, that might shew them to be clergymen? Who, as if they thought it a shame to be known in their own characters, approach, in their exterior, as near to the appearance of persons engaged in those walks of life, which they evidently shew that they envy, as may give them a chance of being confounded with them; and exhibit such motley characters in our streets and public places, half lay, half clerical, as afford laughter to the scorers, and create pity and disgust in every serious mind. What exam-
 -ples

ples are these ministers to their flocks? How will *they* account for their ordination vow?

With regard to the character of our families, and our care over them, it is required by the apostle St. Paul, that a bishop should be one *that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity*; and he adds the reason, *for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how can he take care of the church of God?* Here we have the groundwork of our ordination vow. It supposes an orderly and well regulated house, open to moderate hospitality, and to a prudent and decent intercourse with society, according to our respective means, but without ostentation, without profusion, without extravagance, or the gross excesses of vulgar intemperance. It supposes a strict attention to the conduct and morals of our servants and dependants, and to the superior education of our children, so as that they may be patterns of decency, propriety, modesty, and christian reserve—It supposes family instruction, and family prayer, that most neglected of all the christian duties, even among the ministers of God.

The last remaining vow to be considered, is that of obedience to those “to whom is com-

E

“mitted

“ mitted the charge and government over us.”
 —If all were influenced by the genuine spirit of our profession; if none entered into the ministry, from motives inconsistent with its dignity, its sanctity, its objects; if worldly considerations and views of interest never predominated over a sense of duty, and we always thought less of what we were to gain by the benefice, than how we were to discharge the obligations, which it essentially supposes, it would be unnecessary to dwell much on this particular vow. We should not have much to dread, in calling ourselves to an account, for the manner of discharging it. But in such large bodies of men, it is not to be expected, that, even with more pains than are now taken to exclude them, some individuals, totally unacquainted with the temper of the ministry, and altogether unqualified to submit to its restraints, should not break in upon us. Even in the earliest ages, when, as yet, the believers formed but a small community, there were *false apostles*, and *false teachers* — *lovers of this world*, who preached Christ *not sincerely, but out of contention*, and in opposition to those whom he had vested with his authority. It is, therefore, no imputation against us, my respectable brethren, if such should be occasionally found amongst us. The presumption of inexperience, and the forwardness and flippancy,

pancy, which the want of a knowledge of the world, and what is due to particular situations, is so apt to produce, (especially under the influence of that levelling spirit, which infests every profession, more or less, in the present age, but which, as it is the most opposite to ours, so have we most reason to dread it, and to banish it from the world) must be sometimes apprehended, particularly in those, who, from their standing, know not the discipline of other days. But age, the repository of wisdom, and a ripeness of thought, and a fulness of information, that oftentimes wait not for fulness of years, and an adequate knowledge of our respective duties, which an acquaintance with the canons and regulations of the church, and growing experience in the ministry, will not fail to supply, will readily and cheerfully bend to that jurisdiction, in the vigour and efficacy of which, all are equally interested.

It is to ministers of this description and temper, that I would exhort those persons to apply for advice and instruction, whose consciences may accuse them, not only of having violated the vow, which I am calling to their recollection, but also of having broken the solemn, deliberate, and positive oath, by which

they further bound themselves, on their institution to their respective benefices. The suggestions of men, not interested in the character of their profession, nor acquainted with its spirit or obligations; the subterfuges and evasions, which men, living by litigiousness, may suggest to them, will be of little avail to efface the irrevocable oaths and vows, that are on record against them. They will prove but poor salves to the wounded and gangrened conscience, when they either call themselves to an account, as I this day recommend to them, before contrition come too late for amendment, or when they stand their final audit, before the tribunal of Christ, when there is no longer room for repentance, and when he, who swears falsely to his God, must abide his doom.

I have exhausted, I fear, your patience; as I have, nearly, my own strength—but, when you reflect on the importance of the subject, on the importance of the moment, on the stake we all have in the result of the enquiry, which I have instituted, and recommended to you, and, at the same time, reflect, that twelve months, (possibly an eventful period) must pass, before I can communicate with you in this manner again, you will not think it surprising that I should

should have detained you so much longer, than is usual on these occasions.

I shall now conclude, by recurring to the reflections, with which I set out, and endeavouring to renew the impressions, which I first wished to fix in your mind. That the judgments of the Lord are visibly abroad; that a revolution more general and destructive than has ever yet changed the face of things, is in a progress of being accomplished throughout the world; that after having desolated the fairest provinces of the Continent, it threatens to pass the boundaries, within which, Providence has hitherto permitted us to find our safety and protection, and to visit these islands in plundering, and massacreing, and the subverting of all established orders; that, in the very heart of our country, and, perhaps, at every one of our doors, the savage authors of this revolution are certain to find friends and abettors, fitted for their worst purposes—such are the reflections, and such the forebodings of many, whose minds are least tempered to fear or despondency. Should their judgments of *the signs of the times, and the seasons*, be well-founded, is there a doubt where the storm will discharge its first fury? Is there a doubt, but that the desolation, which has so terribly wasted
other

other churches, must involve ours also in ruin? Is there a doubt but that, to make way for the introduction of the missionaries of philosophy, the ministers of the gospel must be first cut off? or, that the property, which the piety and benevolence of former ages had consecrated to the propagation and maintenance of the christian faith, will be seized upon, and perverted to the purposes of those, who maintain that this faith is unnecessary to the well-being of society, and who are leagued and associated to subvert all its establishments?

Under such circumstances, there are two points of view, in which we should consider the threatened danger. The riches of God's mercies are inexhaustible. Many eminent deliverances has he wrought in favour of these kingdoms. Often "have we heard with our ears," and often "have our fathers declared to us, the noble works that he did in their days, and in the old time before them." It may not, therefore, be yet too late to have recourse to his mercy. He may yet be *entreated*—may yet stretch out that hand, that is slow to punish, but strong to save; and *when he gives quietness, who can make trouble?* How incumbent, then, is it in us, who are the priests and ministers of the Lord, first to look to *our own ways*; first

to

to humble ourselves in self-examination, in prayers, and supplications; first, to set an example, in our own persons, of reformation and amendment of life, that we may be the better prepared to be intercessors for our people; that we may, with the more confidence and hopes of success, *lift up our voices, like trumpets, to shew them their transgressions*; and by inducing them to cleanse, each his own heart, of the particular sin he indulges, lessen the mass of national iniquity, and move our God still to leave us the light of the gospel of his Son, and the blessings of quiet and peace.

But if, for the sins of priest and people, he has determined to visit us *in his wrath*, and *will be no longer entreated*; if he comes, *with his fan in his hand, thoroughly to purge his floor*, and we are, finally, to be delivered over to the rage of our implacable enemies, how are we to stand prepared for the fiery trial? How shall we fit ourselves to endure the sufferings of persecution, such as the report of them has been brought to us, from other lands? Its confiscations, its imprisonments, its massacres, its instruments of execution, and public death? Shall we be of the number of those, who, hardened from despair, and finding no resource, no stay, no support,

port, either in their reflections on their past lives, or in their prospects from futurity, join in *confederacy* with the apostates from our faith, and sell themselves, and their cause, to the *people of their abominations*? Or, shall we, by entering into a full and strict review of our past lives, by confessing our past transgressions, correcting our past errors, and strenuously setting ourselves down to the discharge of our duty, as long as the *day* is yet left us *to work*, labour to be classed among the number of those *true and faithful servants*, who *shall have come out of great tribulation, and shall have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*? May these be the reflections, with which we shall separate, each to the discharge of his own duty. May the faithful and exemplary minister return to his flock, animated to new exertions in the course he has hitherto run! May he appear, in the *midst of the congregation*, with the zeal and earnestness of Aaron, and *beholding the plague already begun among the people*, stand between the dead and the living, and, at least, *save himself, and those who will hear him*! May the thoughtless, the inconsiderate, and the negligent (the only other description that I can even suppose to be amongst us) enter, at length, seriously, and as for their lives, into a comparative examination

examination of their conduct and their engagements; of what they owed to their profession, and what they have hitherto done for it! May they receive the exhortations they have heard from me this day, as from one who is *jealous over them with a godly jealousy*, but who disclaims all personal allusion—who disclaims all particular applications, except to himself, and for the part in the general pictures, he has drawn, in which his conscience may point out to him his own resemblance! So may they divest themselves of every impression, foreign to the only object, which I have had in view; and entering with me, and their brethren, on the great work that is now so peculiarly incumbent on us all, depart from this place, with a thorough feeling of what they owe to themselves, to their ministry, to the souls committed to their charge, and *to the great shepherd of souls*.

For my own part, I can take heaven to witness, this day, that with all openness and sincerity, with *plainness of speech*, and an over-flowing heart, I have laboured to *put you all in remembrance*, and to *stir up*, in myself and you, *the gift of God, which was given us by the putting on of hands*. With what effect I may have laboured, I must leave to the operation of his

grace, without whom *we can do nothing*. This I know from his spirit; that “ *in a great house there are many vessels, not only of gold and of silver, but also of wood, and of earth, and some to honor, and some to dishonor. But if a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor; sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good word. Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.* ”



F I N I S.